

OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324162

Breda Gardiner

Clarke Street

Athenry

Galway

H65NR77

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

Date: 26 May 2026

Re: Observation to the proposed development of a 220kV substation, telecommunications mast and underground electricity cable infrastructure with associated works.

Location: Rathmorrissey, Pollnagroagh, Moanbaun, Castlelambert, Knocknacreeva, Caraunduff, Caherbriskaun, Lisheenkyle East, Barrettspark and Cashla (Townlands), Athenry, Co. Galway

Applicant: Bord Gáis Energy Limited

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Breda Gardiner and I reside on Clarke Street, Athenry, located just over 2km from the site of the proposed development associated with planning application reference 324162 and the wider connected Cashla Peaker Project.

I have strong family and community connections within the local area and regularly spend time with close family members living near the proposed development infrastructure. My niece, together with her husband and their two young children, lives in Pollnagroagh, approximately 800 metres from the proposed development area and associated infrastructure. Given their proximity, they would be directly affected by the cumulative impacts associated with the proposed substation, underground grid infrastructure and wider connected peaker plant development.

These children will attend local schools located within approximately 2km of the site and participate in outdoor activities and sport throughout the community. I also use the L3103 regularly and am deeply concerned regarding the cumulative impact that prolonged construction activity, trenching works, increased heavy goods

vehicle traffic and temporary traffic management systems could have on road safety, emergency access and daily community life. These are narrow rural roads already heavily used by local residents, school traffic, cyclists, agricultural vehicles and local businesses. I am particularly concerned about the safety of children, vulnerable road users and older residents who rely on these roads every day.

I am also deeply concerned about the potential impact of emissions, air pollution and environmental disturbance on the health and wellbeing of nearby residents, particularly children, older persons and vulnerable individuals, both now and into the future. Given the prevailing south-westerly wind direction towards Athenry town, I am concerned that emissions and air pollution associated with the wider connected development may affect not only nearby rural homes, but also the wider town and surrounding residential communities over time.

In addition to concerns regarding health and traffic safety, I am also concerned about the visual impact and industrialisation of the surrounding countryside arising from the introduction of large-scale energy infrastructure into this rural landscape. In my view, the scale and character of the proposed development would fundamentally alter the rural setting, landscape character and residential amenity of the surrounding area.

As a resident of Athenry, I greatly value the town's heritage, character and strong sense of community. Athenry is a beautiful heritage town, and the surrounding rural agricultural landscape forms an important part of its wider setting and identity. I genuinely do not understand how a development of this scale and industrial character could be considered appropriate in such close proximity to Athenry, along constrained rural roads and within an established agricultural landscape.

I am also concerned that the wider Cashla Peaker Project has been divided into separate planning applications, despite the obvious operational relationship between the proposed generating station, substation and associated underground grid infrastructure. In my view, this has created a barrier for many residents attempting to fully understand the overall scale, cumulative impact and long-term implications of the complete development proposal.

The separation of the project into multiple applications has made it more difficult and costly for residents and community members to participate effectively in the planning process, review large volumes of technical documentation and prepare detailed submissions in relation to the wider connected project. I believe the overall development should be assessed as one integrated project rather than as separate standalone applications.

I also note that many people within the community were not fully aware of the scale or implications of the wider connected project until relatively recently. While significant efforts have been made by the Athenry Peaker Plant Concern Group to inform local residents, it appears that engagement by the applicant has been limited, particularly for residents living beyond a 2km radius of the site.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse planning permission for the proposed development.

Having reviewed the application documentation, I have outlined my concerns regarding the proposed development

Emissions Impact on Residents and Vulnerable Groups

Although this application relates to the proposed substation and mast, both form part of infrastructure required for the wider Cashla Peaker Project and the operation of the proposed gas-fired peaker plant. I am concerned about the potential impact of emissions associated with the overall development on local air quality and public health, particularly for nearby residents, children, older people and individuals with respiratory conditions.

Pressure for Further Expansion Near Homes and Communities

I am also concerned that approval of this development could create pressure for further expansion and additional energy infrastructure within the area over time. In my opinion, this type of industrial infrastructure is not appropriate so close to homes, farms, schools and established rural communities.

Karst Geology and Constrained Road Network

The proposed cable route would involve major construction activity through established rural areas with ribbon development, homes, farms, schools and businesses located along the route. In my view, the cumulative impact of prolonged roadworks, rock-breaking, excavation activity and construction traffic has not been fully addressed within the application documentation, particularly given the sensitive karst limestone geology and constrained nature of the local road network.

Emergency Services and Limited Alternative Routes

I am concerned about the impact the proposed cable and construction works could have on emergency access and daily movement throughout the area. The affected rural roads are used daily by ambulances, emergency services, carers, school transport, farmers, local businesses and residents, and many of these roads have limited alternative access routes available.

Long-Term Landscape Reinstatement and Visual Amenity

I am also concerned that insufficient information has been provided regarding long-term landscape reinstatement and ongoing maintenance responsibilities following completion of the proposed works. In my view, the cumulative impact of vegetation loss, hedgerow disturbance and infrastructure works could have a lasting effect on the visual amenity and landscape character of the surrounding rural area.

Negative Effect on Residential Character and Quality of Life

The affected area forms part of a growing rural residential community within the wider Athenry area, where many families choose to live because of its rural character, agricultural setting and proximity to local towns, schools and employment centres. The area has experienced significant residential and commuter-related growth in recent years. I am concerned that the introduction of major energy infrastructure into this established rural environment would negatively affect the residential character, visual amenity and overall attractiveness of the area as a place to live and raise families, while also impacting the enjoyment and quality of life of existing residents and property owners.

Priority for Renewable and Lower-Carbon Alternatives

I believe greater priority should be given to renewable energy, energy storage and lower-carbon infrastructure solutions rather than substantial long-term investment in infrastructure associated with fossil fuel generation. In my view, the proposed development raises concerns regarding consistency with future climate policy,

sustainable development principles and Ireland's transition towards a lower-carbon energy system.

Transparency and Aarhus Convention Obligations

Given the scale and long-term nature of the proposed infrastructure works, I believe a greater level of transparent community consultation and public engagement should have taken place before the application was submitted. In my view, the level of public consultation and access to clear and understandable information has been inadequate and raises concerns regarding the principles of transparency and public participation under the Aarhus Convention.

Likely Scale and Duration of Disruption Not Fully Reflected

I am concerned that the application does not fully reflect the likely scale, duration and intensity of disruption associated with prolonged construction works, trenching activity, traffic management systems, road restrictions, rock-breaking and associated infrastructure works across multiple rural communities. Given the nature of the local road network and surrounding residential areas, I believe the likely impact during the construction phase has been significantly underestimated.

Conclusion

Given the scale of the proposed development and the uncertainty regarding construction impacts, groundwater disturbance, traffic disruption, vibration impacts and long-term infrastructure effects, I do not believe this proposal represents proper planning and sustainable development. In light of the unresolved concerns regarding cumulative impacts, groundwater protection, traffic safety, environmental effects and the adequacy of the supporting assessments, I believe a precautionary approach should be applied in the assessment of this application. I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse permission for the proposed development.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Breda Gardiner', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Name: Breda Gardiner

Date: 26 May 2026